Technology, Environment and Forests. A Bill to amend the Designs Act, 1911 has already been passed by the Rajya Sabha in the Winter Session, 1999.

Increase in imports/exports

298. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether imports/exports have shown rising trend during the last six months;

(b) if so, the extent of increase; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to curb imports and increase exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics provisional data, the exports have increased to US $ 27419.23 million during April—Dec. 1999 from US $ 24279.08 million during the same period last year registering an increase of 12.93%. Imports have also increased to US $ 34457.91 million during April—Dec. 1999 from US $ 31607.50 million during 1998-99 showing an increase of 9.02%.

(c) A large portion of our imports are necessary to sustain economic growth. A number of steps have been taken to accelerate exports which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation, simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.

WTO negotiations on services and farm produce tariff

299. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether WTO propose to reopen the negotiations on services and farm produces tariff;

(b) Whether Government agreed for another round of negotiations on these issues; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefore and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The Negotiations on Services and Agriculture are mandated negotiations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) which are part of the WTO Agreements